

THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE

other respects, over the course of the centuries
the civiliz?

China has exhibited anything but a uniform or
monotonous

There is the pottery of prehistoric times with
its
and colored surfaces, some of it reminiscent of
early ceramics
to the west of China. Between it and the surviving
examples of
the artistic genius of the Shang dynasty a gap
may have inter-
vened—although the two may have overlapped.
From the Shang
are still extant "oracle bones/" the writing on
which shows skill
and taste, and some jade. There are also bronzes—
weapons and
vessels of various kinds—although some experts are
reluctant con-
fidently to assign to the Shang many of the objects
usually attrib-
uted to it. While obviously archaic, they possess
vigor as well as
grace of outline, with geometrical designs and more
or less con-
ventionalized animal forms, and bear witness to a
civilization
which was no longer primitive.

From the Chou, with its long duration and lasting
into the third
century B.C., a large number of objects remain,
many of them dis-
closed by accidental exhumation. Systematic
archeological exca-
vations on a large scale would certainly bring to
light quantities
of additional examples. Bronze weapons, vessels of
many shapes,
and bells are fairly numerous. On some is seen the
favorite de-
sign of an ogre, or glutton, the *t'ao t'ieh*. There
are pieces of
jade, many of them symbols of Heaven and
Earth. For cen-
turies the Confucian Temple in the capital has
housed the famous
ten stone drums, boulders roughly hewn and
bearing inscriptions
in archaic characters. Much of the art of the Chou
was appar-
ently a continuation of that of the Shang, but with
modifications.
Especially toward the latter part of the dynasty
new influences

entered, possibly Scythian, from that great region in Central Europe-Asia with which the Chinese have through the centuries been closely in touch and from which have repeatedly come contributions to Chinese culture.

Artistically the Ch'in was in large part an extension of the latter part of the Chou, but with increasing liveliness of style and a certain exuberance and flamboyance which may have been due in part to the general temper of the times and in part to contacts with the outside world. Influences may have entered through the conquest of Ch'u, whose culture in some respects differed from that of the North.